Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the December 6, 2023 DRB Meeting

New construction of a mixed-use commercial building

Case # 23-78:	757 Court Ave. Memphis, TN 38105
Applicant/Owner:	Daniel Szymanek Development Team Representative 5410 Southwood Dr. Memphis, TN 38120
Background:	The subject property (0.37 acres) is located at the southwest corner of North Manassas and Court Avenue in the heart of the Medical District. The existing 1-story building on site will be demolished and replaced with a new 36,000 sq. ft. commercial mixed-use building with a contemporary architectural design. The 4-story project consists of 45 apartment units and approximately 2,400 sq. ft. of ground-floor commercial space. Additionally, proposed site improvements include a new surface parking, landscaping, new sidewalks, and streetscape enhancements. Parking includes approximately 17 new off-street parking spaces as well as on-street parking along Court Avenue and on-site bike racks. DRB review is required for this project because it received a 10-year PILOT from the Center City Revenue Finance Corporation (CCRFC) at its November 17, 2021 meeting.
Project Description:	The site plan is a L-shaped configuration with the primary building corner facing out towards the corner of Manassas and Court. The northern building mass includes a mix of apartment units, apartment lobby, and amenity space including the gym and mailroom at the ground floor. The southern building mass will provide commercial space for lease and is separated from the other mass by a building break and breezeway on the ground floor. The upper building floors overhang the ground floor footprint on the east, north, and south sides of the building. Vehicular access to the rear parking area is provided through the public alley along the south property line. A dumpster pad with a CMU block enclosure is found at the southwest corner of the site.

The primary building cladding will be a metal panel with a vertical pattern and metal trim cap along the top edge. These metal panels are the predominate exterior cladding material on the east side of the building. This metal paneling will wrap the corners and continue along a portion of the north and south elevations at each corner. The remainder of the north and south building elevations will consist of a board and batten style cementitious fiber panel with a vertical pattern. The narrow vertical articulation of the batten elements will mimic the vertical corrugation pattern of the metal panels. A portion of the west elevation will feature the metal panels at the northern end of the building with the remainder of that elevation to feature the same cementitious fiber panel design.

The upper floors of each elevation will feature "shadow box" windows that are extruded from the exterior wall plane to create a shade and show effect. Recessed balconies with wood trim, cable railing, and dark bronze aluminum and glass storefronts are visible on each building elevation. The ground floor along the south, east, and north elevations will include a glass and aluminum storefront in a dark bronze color. Brick cladding will be utilized as an infill material between portions of the storefront system at the east and north sides of the building.

Final signage plans will be submitted for DRB review and potential approval at a later date. The current concept drawings show a potential rooftop sign to identify the building.

Staff Recommendation:

The proposed building design is unquestionably a contemporary approach to urban infill. DRB's Design Guidelines encourage new construction that appropriately fits its context and does not require that new construction look artificially old. New construction should be designed to be a product of its own time while still respecting the established character of the neighborhood.

The proposed material palette of brick, glass & aluminum storefront, metal paneling, and cementitious siding will not be out of character in the Medical District. The surrounding buildings are a highly eclectic collection of historic architecture, new apartment construction, institutional and other medical campus buildings. Moreover, the height of the proposed building will fit well within the range of structures in the immediate vicinity, including the recently completed and adjacent Orleans Station apartment community.

Importantly, the building design and site plan is supportive of a pedestrian-friendly environment. The location and amount of

ground floor storefront will provide the kind of transparency and activation necessary to support a vibrant pedestrian realm. The public sidewalks along Court and Manassas will also be repaired and repoured as necessary. Additionally, the site plan locates surface parking to the rear and screened from view. Making parking subordinate to the primary structure is a key strategy for encouraging new infill that fits the traditional building pattern in the neighborhood and encourages pedestrian activity.

Staff recommends approval with final exterior signage and streetscape/landscaping plans submitted to the DRB for review and approval at a later date.